

19 NOV 2003

Rahim-Rotation

SABAH UMNO INFO CHIEF PROPOSES SCRAPPING OF ROTATION SYSTEM

KOTA KINABALU, Nov 19 (Bernama) -- The Sabah Umno Information Head Datuk Abdul Rahim Ismail today said the rotation system for the post of Chief Minister should be abolished as it posed a major obstacle to efforts at reviving the Sabah economy.

"The issue on the economy in Sabah can be overcome if the political situation in the state is conducive. The rotation system is a major obstacle and a burden to the people," he said.

Abdul Rahim, who is also Sabah Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry, said this when commenting on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's statement that he left it to the Sabah Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties to resolve the rotation issue.

Abdul Rahim said the rotation formula theoretically was good but in practice and based on experience, it was a major disaster for Sabah politics.

He said the rotation system should be reviewed as soon as possible because the economic weakness or the slow pace of development in Sabah was due to the rotation system for the Chief Minister's post.

Meanwhile, Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) reiterated its stand in rejecting the rotation formula as it felt that the system was a burden to the people and affected the state's administrative machinery.

PBS deputy president Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili said the rotation system was not included in the State Constitution.

The rotation system for the post of Chief Minister was mooted by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and implemented since the BN formed the state government in March 1994.

It aimed to give an opportunity to the leaders of the three major ethnic groups in Sabah - Muslim Bumiputeras, non-Muslim Bumiputeras and the Chinese -- to become Chief Minister based on a two-year rotation formula.

However, there was a slight change in the system in March 2001, enabling a leader from Umno to assume the post of Chief Minister after the expiry of the term for a particular ethnic group.

So far, the system had seen the appointment of seven Chief Ministers namely Tun Sakaran Dandai, Datuk Salleh Said Keruak, Datuk Yong Teck Lee, Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, Datuk Osu Sukam, Datuk Chong Kah Kiat and Datuk Seri Musa Aman, the current Chief Minister.

-- BERNAMA

EM NT RON AO